

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 TRSE-00 COME-00 LAB-04 SIL-01 /061 W
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R 151523Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5750
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, IS
SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH BAR-LEV

1. CHARGE AND POLITICAL OFFICER MET WITH HAIM BAR-LEV, MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY, ON APRIL 15. BAR-LEV IS THE LABOR ALIGNMENT'S CAMPAIGN MANAGER FOR THE ELECTIONS AND WAS ONE OF ONLY TWO MINISTERS WHO REMAINED NEUTRAL DURING THE RABIN-PERES CONTEST BEFORE THE CONVENTION (THE OTHER WAS HAIM ZADOK). BAR-LEV SAID HE BELIEVED THAT THE ALIGNMENT GAINED FROM LAST WEEK'S SWITCH TO PERES. HE EXPLAINED THAT WITH RABIN HEADING THE LIST THE HAWKISH ELEMENT AMONG TRADITIONAL ALIGNMENT VOTERS WOULD HAVE MOVED TO MORE HARDLINE PARTIES SUCH AS THE LIKUD, SHLOMZION, AND BEN PORAT'S LIST.THESE VOTERS WILL NOW RETURN TO THE ALIGNMENT. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE DOVISH FRINGE OF ALIGNMENT VOTERS, WHO WOULD HAVE DESERTED THE ALIGNMENT HAD PERES BEATEN RABIN LAST FEBRUARY, WILL TEND TO REMAIN WITH THE ALIGNMENT.THE BITTERNESS OF A RABIN DEFEAT BY
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PERES IS ABSENT FROM THE HAPPENSTANCE OF PERES GAINING THE LEADERSHIP VIRTUALLY BY DEFAULT. MORE-OVER, MAPAM'S DECISION TO STAY WITH THE ALIGNMENT REASSURES THE DOVES.

2. BAR-LEV THOUGHT THAT THE DMC WOULD WIN "TEN OR FEWER SEATS." HE BELIEVED IT WAS ON THE DOWNGRADE.

PEOPLE ARE BEGINNING TO SEE YADIN'S FAULTS: HE IS NOT A POLITICIAN AND LACKS PATIENCE. THE VOTERS ARE ALSO TURNED OFF BY SHMUEL TAMI'S MAJOR INFLUENCE IN THE PARTY. HE IS NOTORIOUS AS A RIGHT-WING OPPORTUNIST WHO HAS CHANGED PARTIES INNUMERABLE TIMES.. BESIDES, THE DMC LEADERSHIP CONTAINS MANY CONTRADICTIONS. THERE WAS BAD BLOOD, FOR EXAMPLE, BETWEEN TAMIR AND MEIR AMIT, OVER THE SHUBINSKY AFFAIR OF TWO YEARS AGO WHICH WAS INVESTIGATED BY TAMIR AS HEAD OF THE KNESSET'S FINANCE COMMITTEE. TAMIR MADE SEVERAL ACCUSATIONS AGAINST AMIT, WHO WAS LATER CLEARED OF WRONGDOING. WHEN ASKED WHETHER SIMILAR STRESSES AND CONTRADICTIONS COULD NOT BE FOUND IN THE LABOR PARTY, BAR-LEV EXPLAINED THAT THE DIFFERENCE IS THAT THE LABOR PARTY IS A MASS MOVEMENT WITH HISTORIC ROOTS IN THE COUNTRY THAT CAN ACCOMMODATE DIVERGENT FORCES BECAUSE OF BASIC COMMITMENT AMONG ITS MEMBERS.

3. HE THOUGHT THE LIKUD WOULD LOSE A FEW SEATS AND THE LIBERAL PARTY WOULD BE A CANDIDATE FOR SPLITTING OFF (FROM THE LIKUD) AND JOINING A FUTURE COALITION GOVERNMENT. HE ESTIMATED THAT ABOUT 25-30 PERCENT OF LIKUD VOTERS (MOSTLY SUPPORTERS OF THE LIBERAL PARTY) AGREE WITH THE LABOR PARTY'S PLATFORM ON BORDERS AND SECURITY.

4. BAR-LEV FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO ESTIMATE THE OUTCOME FOR THE NRP - "PERHAPS EIGHT SEATS OR MORE." IT WOULD REMAIN A LIKELY CANDIDATE FOR A FUTURE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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COALITION, BUT THE PARTY IS CHANGING (AND, FROM HIS TONE, NOT FOR THE BETTER).

5. BAR-LEV SAID THAT HE READILY SIGNED THE COMMITMENT TO MOSHE DAYAN FAVORING A REFERENDUM BEFORE CEDING TERRITORY ON THE WEST BANK. THIS WAS A SMALL PRICE TO PAY TO KEEP DAYAN WITHIN THE PARTY, ESPECIALLY SINCE THIS HAD BEEN PART OF THE COALITION AGREEMENT OF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT AND WAS EVEN NOW ADVOCATED BY MANY WITHIN THE LABOR PARTY. HOWEVER, HAD HE KNOWN THAT DAYAN WOULD RESUME HIS FLIRTATION WITH THE LIKUD JUST BEFORE THE KNESSET LIST FILING (TEL AVIV 2608), HE WOULD NOT HAVE GIVEN THIS ASSURANCE TO HIM.

6. BAR-LEV MAINTAINED THAT HE DOES NOT WANT TO RETAIN THE COMMERCE PORTFOLIO AND SAID HE HAD NO INTEREST IN BECOMING MINISTER OF FINANCE. WHEN THE SUGGESTION WAS MADE THAT HE WOULD BE AN APPROPRIATE CANDIDATE FOR DEFENSE, HE SAID HE DOUBTED THAT THIS SLOT WOULD BE AVAILABLE

TO HIM - BUT HE DID NOT DENY THAT IT WOULD INTEREST
HIM.

7. COMMENT: BAR-LEV IS A FRIENDLY AND FAIRLY LOW-
KEY GENERAL-TURNED-POLITICIAN WHO WAS PROBABLY A GOOD
CHOICE TO HEAD THE LABOR CAMPAIGN, IF ONLY BECAUSE HE
IS NOT STRONGLY IDENTIFIED WITH ANY PARTICULAR FACTION
IN THE PARTY. HIS STAYING NEUTRAL IN THE RABIN-PERES
STRUGGLE PLACES HIM IN A GOOD POSITION TO ACT AS CONCILIATOR.
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